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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are given to school board members and administrators on using advocacy communications in dealing with teachers' strikes. Strikes are described as staged media events and extensions of the collective bargaining process. An educational association's "game plan" is outlined which summarizes the five central themes used by most associations to prepare the campaign against the school district. Tactics used during negotiations are listed including the seven deadly rules or power tactics from Saul O. Alinsky's book and training seminars entitled "Rules for Radicals." Ten telltale signs shown by teachers which indicate that a strike is drawing near are listed. Advice is provided to school districts on preparing a defense which consists of using "offense" by having a good public relations program to present their position. Advocacy communication is recommended and three steps are given in planning an effective campaign. The final advice includes three points to consider when preparing for a strike or any other crisis. Concluding these guidelines is a list of eight references. (EM)

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Advocacy Communications:

A Game Plan To Win Public Support

1983 NSBA Convention, San Francisco April 23-26

By Charles J. Namit

Speaker Namit Clinic No. D-63

"A good offense is the best defense," Paul "Bear" Bryant, former Alabama football coach.

"Keep the pressure on with different tactics and actions, and utilize all events of this period for your purposes"; a favorite teacher tactic, adapted from "Rules for Radicals," by Saul O. Alinsky.

"Advocacy -- the act of defending or maintaining a cause or proposal," Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

STRIKES ARE STAGED MEDIA EVENTS

In the last decade or so, greater teacher militancy has resulted from attempts by the national, state and local education associations to develop a unified political and economic power base. The primary tool in this power play has been the collective bargaining process.

The pressure applied to locals by state and national associations to assert this new found muscle has created increased labor/management tensions, and with it, more teacher strikes.

Therefore, school board members and administrators must view a strike as an extension of the collective bargaining process. In any case, three things to remember about school strikes are:

1. Never assume that a strike can't happen in your district.
2. Strikes just don't happen. They're carefully staged and orchestrated events.
3. Strikes will normally be settled at the bargaining table, instead of "on the picket line."

THE ASSOCIATION'S 'GAME PLAN'

The central themes espoused by most education associations can be summarized as follows:

- The old ethic was to keep what went on in negotiations quiet. That ethic was promoted by school boards and we bought it. Joint news release agreements and membership news blackouts were the rule.

- We're now discovering what school boards must have known all along; we have more bargaining power when our members and the public know what the board is trying to do to us at the table.

- The premise is that communications, or P.R., is simply another collective bargaining skill at least equal to, or more important than verbal skills, contract writing skills, budget research and analysis and legal bargaining.

- Many of the skills easily can be applied to such areas as legislation, political campaigns and teacher "image" campaigns.

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- We can't bargain with our "communications arm" tied behind our backs.

Armed with these precepts, education association leadership prepares the campaign against the enemy -- the "haves" -- the administration and school boards. But before we get to the game plan, let's look at the overall strategy and tactics behind the game plan.

RULES FOR RADICALS: TACTICS DURING NEGOTIATIONS AND STRIKES

Education associations nationwide have embraced a very specific strategy in dealing with school boards in strike situations. The concept is embodied in Saul O. Alinsky's book and training seminars entitled "Rules for Radicals."

Simply put, the shaping of public opinion as a weapon is all important. Whoever is victorious in this arena will not only win the battle but also the war. Although Alinsky developed some eighteen different rules or tactics, we'll focus only on seven of them.

Seven Deadly Rules Or Power Tactics[1]

1. The First Rule: THE REAL ACTION IS THE ENEMY'S REACTION. Don't react to statements in an angry fashion. Play the game under "control."

2. The Second Rule: PICK THE TARGET, FREEZE IT, PERSONALIZE IT, AND POLARIZE IT. In conflict tactics there are certain rules that the organizer should always regard as universalities. One is that the opposition must be singled out as the target and "frozen" with criticism.

   The forces for change must keep this in mind and pin that target down securely. If an organization permits responsibility to be diffused and distributed in a number of areas, attack becomes impossible.

   Moreover, any target can always say, "Why do you center on me when there are others to blame as well?" When you "freeze the target," you disregard these arguments and, for the moment, all the others to blame.

   Then as you zero in and freeze your target and carry out your attack, all of the "others" come out of the woodwork very soon. They become visible by their support of the target.

   The other important point in the choosing of a target is that it must be a personification, not something general and abstract such as a community's segregated practices or a major corporation or school district in turmoil.

   With the focus comes a polarization. But to be effective, all issues must be polarized if action is to follow (i.e. the board is against good education by not agreeing to class size limitations).

3. The Third Rule: RIDICULE IS MAN'S MOST POTENT WEAPON. It is almost impossible to counterattack ridicule. Also it infuriates the opposition, who then react to your advantage.

4. The Fourth Rule: THE ENEMY PROPERLY GOADED AND GUIDED IN HIS REACTION WILL BE YOUR MAJOR STRENGTH.

5. The Fifth Rule: KEEP THE PRESSURE ON WITH DIFFERENT TACTICS AND ACTIONS. Utilize all events of the period for your purpose.

6. The Sixth Rule: POWER IS NOT ONLY WHAT YOU HAVE BUT WHAT THE ENEMY THINKS YOU HAVE. Power is derived from two main sources: money and people. Lacking money, the "have-nots" must build power from their own ranks. A mass movement must express itself with mass tactics. Against the finesse and sophistication of the status quo, the "have-nots" have always had to club their way into power.

7. The Seventh Rule: A TACTIC THAT DRAGS ON TOO LONG BECOMES A DRAG. Workers can sustain militant interest in any issue for only a limited time, after it becomes a ritualistic commitment. New issues and causes always need to be developed.

Without a doubt, the seventh rule is the most important tactic of them all from the school board point-of-view. For this is the education assoication's "achilles heel." So when the tactic drags on too long, the association leadership and their strike become vulnerable. More about this later.

'TELLTALE SIGNS' AS A STRIKE DRAWS NEAR[2]

One of the most frequently asked questions, "When will we know that there's going to be a strike?" While each strike differs, here are some signs to look for in anticipation of a strike situation.

- Teachers boycott preschool conferences.
- Teachers enroll in "crisis management" courses or start a "strike school."
- Attendance at faculty meetings falls off.
- Enter - leave demonstrations take place (Teachers enter and leave each school building "en masse" each day).
- Teachers "work-to-the-rule."
- The troops are brought out for school board meetings (i.e. "silent protest").
- "Informational Picketing" is instituted.
- Student support is enlisted:
  * Teachers attempt to turn classrooms into propaganda mills.
  * Regular teachers urge students to defy any substitute teachers.
  * Regular teachers tell students flatly that no work assigned by a substitute teacher during a strike will be accepted for credit once the strike ends.
  * Teachers on the verge of striking tell high school seniors that work lost during the expected strike will prevent graduation.
- Selective disruptions occur (i.e. single department or school is hit with a mass "sick leave call").
- Use of local media is stepped up.

TEACHER TACTICS DURING A STRIKE[3]

Once the teachers have "hit the bricks," many of the following will occur.

- A "Crisis Center" opens.
- Essential items disappear (i.e. keys, lesson plans, seating charts, attendance books, curriculum materials, etc.).
- Sabotage becomes evident.

- Posters and brochures flood the community.
- Rumors proliferate.
- A speaker's bureau is established.
- "Crisis meetings" are called and conducted by union members.
- Pressure is put on the news media (i.e. the "big doubt" is planted in the media, "Why won't the board bargain in good faith?").
- Seemingly aimless telephone campaign is started; school administrators and board members are the targets.
- The community leadership is enlisted against the board.
- Harassment erupts (priority is to get administration and/or board members to react -- "creative disorder").

IT'S TIME FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO TAKE THE 'OFFENSE'

At this point, many of you may throw up your hands and feel like the defendant in court who shouted out in frustration to the judge at his trial. "Man, this is all persecution . . . I mean prosecution. When do we get to the defense?"

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, if the teachers don't plan to bargain nor strike with their "communications arm" tied behind their backs, then why should school boards fall into that trap?

The answer, of course, is that boards shouldn't! The premises, then, behind this manual are: 1) a good P.R. offense is the best defense; and 2) a school board should never assume that the public or their many publics (students, parents, classified personnel, teachers, etc.) will naturally support the board's position.

With these assumptions, then, how can a board effectively communicate its position(s) on the issues? The answer is "advocacy communications"; by that, we mean the conscious and deliberate commitment by the school board, not merely to react to the education association tactics, but to affirmatively take the offense and shape public opinion.

The use of advocacy communications has been pioneered in effective political campaigns. For some research that supports this communications approach, see the research brief below.

Who are the people you can switch?

There is a growing body of voters who will switch—or split their ticket—if you can reach them and give them good reasons. Experts agree they are *not* people susceptible to highly emotional appeals. They *are* complex voters with a ready grasp of the issues. They also appear to play much more active roles in political opinion formation, discussion and persuasion.

Naturally they're influenced in ways the candidate can't control—newscasts, newspaper editorials and news stories, talk shows.

As the research indicates, voters, or the school district's many publics, are sophisticated individuals; not easily persuaded by emotional appeals. Further, they will support the board's positions if you give them "good reasons." Also, newspaper coverage and ads, as well as opinion leaders are influential, with newspapers and personal contacts being more trustworthy than T.V. or radio. This does not mean, however, that T.V. or radio should be overlooked. It just means that a school board needs to prioritize its resources.

PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

Step 1: ANALYZE YOUR COMMUNITY. First things first! It's often said that "failing to plan, is planning to fail." Most often, the analysis of the community is done intuitively. Consequently, certain strategies are rejected because we "know" that they are not needed or they just won't work. The intent, however, of this step is to allow careful consideration of all the possibilities.

A technique called Forced Field Analysis is employed to assist you in identifying the "helping" and "hindering" forces in your community during a strike situation.[5]

List below on the diagram, all the individuals, community forces and issues that either support/help or oppose/hinder the school district's position in a strike.

YOUR GOAL

Community support of school district position in a crisis situation.

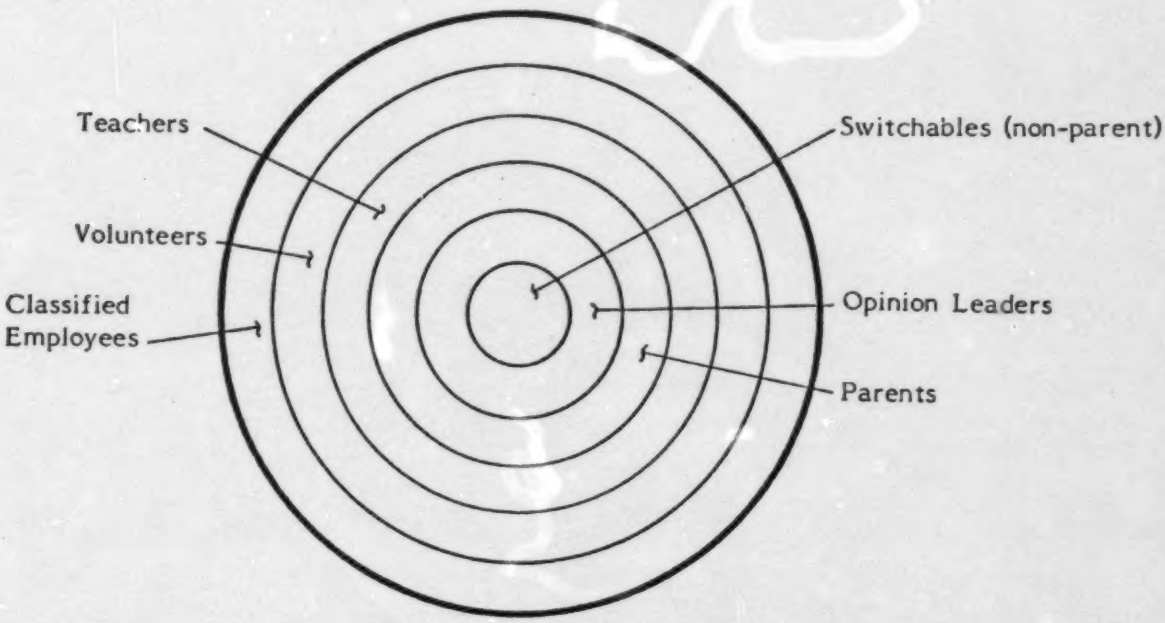
YOUR STRATEGY

Develop specific plans to effectively utilize/mobilize the helping forces and neutralize and/or counter the hindering forces.

HELPING FORCES	HINDERING FORCES
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.

Step 2: TARGETING YOUR PUBLICS. Another valuable political tool is the technique of targeting potentially favorable or switchable publics to the school district story and support of its position.

Based upon your analysis in Step 1, you begin to target or focus on the various publics that make up your community. For example, targeting forces you to "shape" your message to each public (staff and parent letters; fiery speech a before business group or service club, etc.). Below is a targeting model:



By engaging in this process, you identify and prioritize your resources (time, people, money, good will, etc.). Consequently, a well planned and executed advocacy communicactions campaign does not waste resources where it can neither change opinions nor gain support.

Step 3: RULES OR TACTICS FOR AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN.

1. CREATE THE "BIG DOUBT" CONCERNING YOUR OPPONENT'S POSITION. Call into question the motives of the education association (i.e. control of schools; identify a proposal as an education association leadership issue when it is so).

2. NEVER ATTACK EMPLOYEES. A cardinal rule is to never attack employees or their profession in your communications. While a strike is a type of warfare, the enemy is not the employee -- it is the teacher association leadership and the state association. Employees are potential allies; assume their good will, and present them with intelligent arguments, or discount association propaganda with facts. Moreover, if you expect to pass levies in the future, the profession of education must be held in high esteem by the community. This, of course, will not be the case if you attack the very profession that you later want to promote to the public.

3. KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. Become thoroughly familiar with the issues of the work slowdown, strike or work stoppage. To convince others of the correctness of your point-of-view, you must know what you're talking about!

4. ACT, DON'T REACT. The primary ploy of teacher associations is to get you to react to their stories, allegations or tactics. If the teacher association can get you on the defensive -- by losing momentum in your own advocacy campaign -- they can set the tone for their eventual victory. (See appendix B for examples of how to place the teacher associations on the defensive.) There are times when reaction can't be avoided; but, the wise advocate will get to the media first. So, turn the tables on the Association's game plan by staking out your own turf, and defend it through offense. In other words, keep those newspaper editors and news directors (radio and T.V.)up-to-date with informal chats on the progress of negotiations.

If you feel it necessary to refute employee organization arguments -- AND THIS SHOULD BE VERY RARE, INDEED -- answer these questions first:

- How critical is the refutation?
- Is your refutation airtight?
- Is your refutation easy to understand?

If you can't answer all of these questions in the affirmative, don't refute!

5. IDENTIFY YOUR ARGUMENTS WITH THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS. The old adage applies, "When there is a parade, it is better to be leading it, instead of being run over by it." The wisdom, of course, here is to know the needs of your community. If management wants to build community confidence in itself, it has to identify with the needs of a majority of the effective community. Simply put, tailor your arguments to fit your community and its values.

6. EMPHASIZE LOCAL MEDIA. The most important recipients of your story are the local news media, taxpayers, parents and employees of the district. Commuications research shows that your many publics read, listen and view at many levels -- local mini-communications (small town gossip), regional, state and national news -- so don't neglect the local news media and opinion leaders.

Become a credible news source by developing a communications "war room" which distributes accurate and up-to-date information on a regular basis. Many districts fail to realize that they are the "story." So use this power, don't abuse it.

By the way, don't surrender your own employees to the union. Remember, many of your teachers will oppose the positions of the state association. So, if a teacher should contact you, and indicate their discontent with the association's position, suggest that they write the local newspaper stating their opposition.[6]

7. TIME IS ONE OF THE BOARD'S CHIEF WEAPONS. As stated earlier, when an education association tactic begins to drag on, the tactic becomes a drag. To make this counter-tactic effective, the board should adopt a collective policy to "hang in there" for the long haul.[7]

8. USE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION AND PRESENTATION.[8]

- Know your audience and who the real decision-makers are.
- Consider their priorities and interests when establishing objectives/content.

- Plan fully: establish a clear, logical flow of ideas.
- Don't major in minor: concentrate on major objectives/thoughts/concepts.
- Anticipate the unexpected -- and plan for it.
- Reinforce key points with visual aids: K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple and Straightforward).
- Conduct a dress rehearsal, giving attention to detail (i.e. whether a news conference or board presentation, etc.).
- Make the presentation come alive; project naturalness and vitality.
- Invite questions and discussion.
- Know when to stop and then -- STOP!

A FINAL THOUGHT

When preparing for a strike or any crisis, for that matter, you must avoid the consequence that is embodied in the bargainer's lament:

> "You are with me through thick and thin. When it gets thick, you thin out on me!"

To avoid this, you must 1) organize for effectiveness; 2) never assume anything; and 3) prepare for all situations with contingency plans.

The remainder of this manual contains appendices aimed at giving you practical tips and examples of an advocacy communications campaign:

- Appendix A: Tools Of An Effective Advocacy Communications Campaign
- Appendix B: Advocacy Communications Ads And Approaches
- Appendix C: Things To Avoid -- Ineffective Conciliatory Communications

*Appendices A-C were missing from this document prior to its being submitted to the ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

REFERENCES

[1] Adapted from "Rules For Radicals," by Saul O. Alinsky.

[2] Adapted from a special strike issue of the NSBA Journal, March, 1976.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Adapted from "25 Winning Ideas For Political Advertisers, Bureau of Advertising, ANPA.

[5] Adapted from Dorothy P. Craig, HIP Pocket Guide To Planning & Evaluation. San Diego, CA: University Associates, 1978.

[6] Adapted from California Strike Manual, 1971.

[7] Adapted from "Coping With Alinsky Methods," School Administrator, March, 1983.

[8] Adapted from "Communication Is His Business," USA Today, January 28, 1983, p.3B.